

MEETING AW.09:1112

DATE 15:02:12

South Somerset District Council

Draft Minutes of a meeting of the **Area West Committee** held at the Town Hall, Guildhall, Fore Street, Chard on **Wednesday, 15th February 2012.**

(5.30 p.m. – 7.45 p.m.)

Present:

Members: Cllr. Angie Singleton (in the Chair)

Michael Best	Paul Maxwell
David Bulmer	Nigel Mermagen
John Dyke	Sue Osborne (from 5.35 p.m.)
Carol Goodall	Andrew Turpin
Brennie Halse	Martin Wale
Jenny Kenton	

Officers:

Andrew Gillespie	Area Development Manager (West)
Zoe Harris	Community Regeneration Officer (West)
Paul Philpott	Community Development Officer (West)
Nigel Collins	Transport Strategy Officer
Andrew Blackburn	Committee Administrator

(**Note:** Where an executive or key decision is made, a reason will be noted immediately beneath the Committee's resolution.)

106. Minutes (Agenda item 1)

The minutes of the meeting held on the 18th January 2012, copies of which had been circulated, were taken as read and, having been approved as a correct record, were signed by the Chairman.

107. Apologies for Absence (Agenda item 2)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs. Ric Pallister, Ros Roderigo and Kim Turner.

108. Declarations of Interest (Agenda item 3)

The following members declared their personal interests in agenda item 8 (Promoting Crewkerne and Ilminster) because they also served on the organisations with which the District Council were working in partnership in connection with this project to promote Crewkerne and Ilminster to visitors:-

Cllr Angie Singleton	-	Crewkerne Town Council and ABCD
Cllr. Mike Best	-	Crewkerne Town Council and ABCD
Cllr. John Dyke	-	Crewkerne Heritage Centre and ABCD
Cllr. Carol Goodall	-	Ilminster Town Council and Ilminster Forum

The following members declared their personal interests in agenda item 7 (Area West – Requests for Community Grants) because they were also members of town councils who had considered, or were considering, the award of funding to StreetSpace Youth Project and Filmcrew Film Community Group who had applied for a grant from the District Council for those projects detailed in the agenda report:-

Cllr David Bulmer	-	Chard Town Council
Cllr. Brennie Halse	-	Chard Town Council
Cllr. Jenny Kenton	-	Chard Town Council
Cllr. Martin Wale	-	Chard Town Council
Cllr. Angie Singleton	-	Crewkerne Town Council
Cllr. Mike Best	-	Crewkerne Town Council

Cllr. Andrew Turpin declared his personal interest in the application for grant submitted by StreetSpace Youth Project (agenda item 7) because he was associated with a group who were working with StreetSpace to develop community work in Tatworth.

Cllrs. Carol Goodall and Sue Osborne declared their personal and prejudicial interests in the application for grant submitted by Ilminster Arts Centre (agenda item 7) because they had been appointed as the District Council's representatives on that organisation.

109. Public Question Time (Agenda item 4)

No questions or comments were raised by members of the public or parish/town councils.

110. Chairman's Announcements (Agenda item 5)

The Chairman referred to the item for information, which had been circulated with the agenda, regarding the consultation that was taking place on the Council's proposed customer contact guidelines. She urged members to read the report and customer contact guidelines and to inform the Strategic Director (Operations and Customer Focus) if they had any comments on the content, style or layout before the end of February.

The Chairman also reminded members about the consideration of the Draft Core Strategy, which would be taking place at the Committee's meeting on Wednesday, 21st March 2012, commencing at the earlier time of 4.00 p.m.

111. Somerset Community Foundation (Agenda item 6)

The Chairman welcomed Justin Sargent, Chief Executive of the Somerset Community Foundation, who made a presentation on the work of the Foundation and specifically about a new programme called Local Giving.

During his presentation he referred to the Foundation supporting a whole range of different activities and investing in local communities by way of its funding programmes. He informed members of the Foundation's track record in both awarding grants and in building up endowment funding. He also referred to building community philanthropy, particular reference being made to the Local Giving programme, which was a web based fundraising scheme enabling community groups and potential charitable donors to be matched without the requirement of a formal grant making process. He asked the Council to help by putting groups in contact with the Foundation, promoting the Local Giving.com website and

encouraging people or businesses to participate in community philanthropy including contributing to the endowment scheme.

Upon concluding his presentation, Justin Sargent responded to members' questions and comments. Points addressed included the frequency with which grant applications were considered; how the Foundation was run, particularly with regard to the money spent on running costs and the success of the Foundation in raising private funding.

The Chairman thanked Justin Sargent for his interesting presentation and members praised the Foundation for its work, which it was hoped would continue.

NOTED

*(Alice Knight, Third Sector and Partnerships Manager – 01963 435061)
(alice.knight@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

112. Area West – Requests for Community Grants (Executive Decision) (Agenda item 7)

The Community Development Officer (West) referred to the agenda report and updated members on the Community Grants programme. As part of his report he clarified the position with regard to grant contributions from parish and town councils and how applications were scored under the SSDC community grant policies. It was noted that the policy required a contribution from town or parish councils unless there were very exceptional circumstances. The Community Development Officer (West) further reported that where there was no town or parish council contribution the circumstances relevant to the grant application had been set out enabling members to decide whether they considered them to be exceptional and vote accordingly. He further commented that town or parish councils may support organisations in non-financial ways and that other help may be given to an organisation by the local community.

The Community Development Officer (West) also updated members on what would be the latest financial position with the Community Grants Scheme budget if the applications due for consideration at this meeting were approved. It was noted, however, that the Filmcrew Film Community Group had requested that consideration of its application be deferred as they wished to make representations to the Committee but unfortunately were unable to attend this meeting. The Committee was asked, therefore, to consider grant applications submitted by StreetSpace Youth Project, Misterton Women's Institute and the Ilminster Arts Centre.

Prior to considering the grant applications, a debate ensued on the position regarding the consideration of grant applications where there was no funding from town or parish councils and on what represented very exceptional circumstances. Views expressed included the following:-

- the Chairman commented that in those cases where there was no parish/town council contribution, the grant applications had scored over the required threshold in the assessment process and she would have liked to have thought that the grants could be awarded bearing in mind that the money was available in the budget. She also commented that some organisations received parish/town council funding in other ways during the year;
- a member, although supporting the principle of parish/town councils making a contribution, felt that perhaps it should apply only to grants over say, £1,000 unless there was some urgency regarding the need for the grant. It was understood, however, that parish/town councils had limited funds and may find it difficult to

make contributions. In referring to smaller grants the view was expressed that, as with the previous “Opportunity” participatory budgeting events, a grant from the parish/town council would not necessarily be expected;

- a member questioned what constituted very exceptional circumstances and how such circumstances may be interpreted;
- reference was made to some parishes finding it difficult to make contributions especially where precepts had already been set. It was suggested that the arrangements for the District Council’s grants scheme should correlate with the parish precepting process/beginning of the financial year.

The Area Development Manager (West) appreciated the comments made regarding the meaning of exceptional circumstances and mentioned an example that had been accepted in the past. He indicated, however, that there was no prescribed list of exemptions and all officers could do was to put the application before the Committee so that members could exercise their judgement. If members felt genuinely that a different approach was needed, the way the grants programme was administered would need to be reconsidered and he was not sure whether there would be any advantage in so doing.

The Committee then agreed to consider the applications before the Committee during which the circumstances of each one were duly considered.

During consideration of the applications, the Committee noted the comments of Richard Passmore from the StreetSpace Youth Project, Carol Walker from Misterton Women’s Institute and Christine Walker from Ilminster Arts Centre who spoke in support of their respective applications.

Cllrs. Carol Goodall and Sue Osborne having declared their personal and prejudicial interests in the application submitted by Ilminster Arts Centre left the meeting during the determination of that application. They exercised their right under the Code of Conduct to make representations in support of the application before withdrawing from the meeting.

The Committee also noted the comments of ward members in respect of the applications.

Having considered the circumstances in each case, the Committee was content to approve the applications for grants submitted by StreetSpace Youth Project and Misterton Women’s Institute.

During consideration of the application from Ilminster Arts Centre, some members were of the view that, although this was a good application there was no town council contribution and it was not felt that there were exceptional circumstances to enable it to be granted. Reference was made to the application having similarities with that relating to Crowshute House, Chard, which had been deferred at the Committee’s last meeting pending the outcome of Chard Town Council’s consideration of grant awards in the new financial year. For reasons of consistency it was felt that this application should also be deferred. Other members were content that the circumstances relevant to the application were such that they could support the grant in this case. A proposal that the application from Ilminster Arts Centre be deferred was duly seconded but on being put to the vote was lost (3 in favour, 5 against, 1 abstention). It was then proposed and seconded that the application be granted. On being put to the vote, the motion was carried (5 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention).

Arising from consideration of the applications for grant, the Chairman asked members whether they were content to continue on the basis of considering four applications per meeting or whether they would like to hold a workshop to discuss informally the issues that had been raised. Members indicated that they did not feel that a workshop was necessary, the view being expressed that matters had been clarified at this meeting. It was also felt

that the current grants regime should continue. Members concurred, however, with the view that the application for grant submitted by Crowshute House, Chard should come back to the Committee for further consideration at the earliest opportunity, which was noted by the Area Development Manager (West).

RESOLVED: (1) that a grant of £5,661 be awarded to StreetSpace Youth Project towards a project involving three components, i.e. “Meals and Meetings” (engaging with young people), “Zine” (young leaders programme) and “Watch this Space” (community newsletter);

(Resolution passed without dissent)

(2) that a grant of £1,250 be awarded to Misterton Women’s Institute towards the replacement of various kitchen items at the WI Hall;

(Resolution passed without dissent, 2 abstentions)

(3) that a grant of £1,550 be awarded to Iminster Arts Centre towards the redecoration of the Centre;

(5 in favour, 3 against, 1 abstention)

(4) that, at the request of the Filmcrew Film Community Group, consideration of its application for grant be deferred.

(Resolution passed without dissent)

Reason: To determine applications received by the Council for financial assistance.

(Zoë Harris, Community Regeneration Officer (West) – 01460 260423)

(zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk)

(Paul Philpott, Community Development Officer (West) - 01460 260359)

(paul.philpott@southsomerset.gov.uk)

113. Promoting Crewkerne and Iminster (Executive Decision) (Agenda item 8)

The Community Regeneration Officer (West) summarised the agenda report, which informed members of partnership work taking place in both Crewkerne and Iminster to promote the towns to visitors and asked members to allocate funding to enable this project to progress.

The Community Regeneration Officer (West) introduced Stuart Lee from Iminster Forum and Diane Butler, Manager of the Crewkerne Local Information Centre, both of whom spoke at the meeting giving further information about the project.

During the ensuing discussion, the Community Regeneration Officer (West) responded to a number of members’ questions on specific points of detail about the project. Members applauded the initiative and the Committee indicated that it was content to support this partnership project.

RESOLVED: (1) that the report of the Community Regeneration Officer (West) be noted;

(2) that £10,480 be allocated towards the promotion of Crewkerne and Iminster to visitors as detailed in the agenda report.

(Resolution passed without dissent)

Reason: To agree the allocation of funding towards partnership work taking place in Crewkerne and Ilminster to promote the towns to visitors.

*(Zoë Harris, Community Regeneration Officer (West) – 01460 260423)
(zoe.harris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

114. Update on Somerset County Council's Proposals for Bus Subsidy Reductions (Agenda item 9)

The Transport Strategy Officer summarised the agenda report, which updated members on Somerset County Council's proposals for bus subsidy reductions, their potential impacts in respect of Area West and progress following the District Council's formal response to the County Council's consultation.

The Transport Strategy Officer further commented that the crucial point to get across to Somerset County Council was the equality and diversity implications of its proposals, details of which were set out on page 20 of the Committee's agenda report.

He further referred to the District Council's formal response to Somerset County Council's consultation having been forwarded to them, a copy of which was attached to the agenda report. A response to the consultation had also been sent by the District Council's Portfolio Holder and the Transport Strategy Officer was continuing to liaise with the County Council's Transporting Somerset Team Leader to endeavour where possible to lessen the impact of the impending reductions in bus subsidies.

The Transport Strategy Officer referred to there needing to be a more realistic timescale to enable the County Council's officers to consider the issues raised and to give time to put other alternatives in place. He understood that the decision with regard to the reduction in bus subsidies was now to be taken by the County Council on the 27th February 2012.

He also mentioned that through his liaison with the Transporting Somerset Team Leader, he understood that there may be some small movement with regard to the provision of particular bus routes but he would not want to raise expectations with regard to the outcome.

The Transport Strategy Officer in referring to recommendation (2) on the agenda informed members of a suggested response for consideration by the Committee to be sent to Somerset County Council in respect of their bus subsidy reduction proposals.

During the ensuing discussion, reference was made by members to signatures being gathered on a petition to be submitted to the County Council. Members expressed their view that it was important to keep up the pressure on the County Council and that the Area West Committee should make a response to the proposals. In addition to the response suggested by the Transport Strategy Officer, the Committee felt that concerns should be expressed about there having been no economic assessment carried out to indicate the impact of the proposed cuts on the economy of the area.

The Committee also noted the comments of a member who wondered whether alternatives could be looked at on the basis of parish/town councils giving funding towards bus subsidies.

In conclusion, the Committee noted the report and agreed the response to be sent to Somerset County Council.

- RESOLVED:** (1) that the report of the Transport Strategy Officer be noted;
- (2) that the following response be made to Somerset County Council in respect of their bus subsidy reduction proposals:-

The most significant impact of these cuts in bus subsidy will fall on those least able to afford the alternatives to the bus resulting in increased social exclusion in Area West. People living in rural locations that belong to one of the protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 and rely on public transport are likely to be more vulnerable and disadvantaged. This is particularly significant for people with disabilities, older population and people with childcare responsibilities who are mainly women. The South Somerset District Council Area West Committee therefore urges Somerset County Council to consider other alternatives for routes including enhancements to Demand Responsive Transport, using the recent funding provided by the Department for Transport for this purpose and to adopt a more reasonable timescale for implementation to give time to explore other transport options and/or alternative methods of achieving the savings Somerset County Council require.

There is also concern that no economic assessment has been carried out by Somerset County Council to indicate the impact these cuts would have on the economy of the area. There is a potential knock on effect for retail and service providers in our towns and rural centres as well as to the operators themselves in terms of depot viability and to their workforces. Impact Assessments need to be undertaken prior to any final decisions on bus subsidy reductions being approved.

(Nigel Collins, Transport Strategy Officer – 01935 462591)
(nigel.collins@southsomerset.gov.uk)

115. Reports from Members on Outside Organisations (Agenda item 10)

A copy of a report submitted by Cllr. Linda Vijeh regarding Chard Museum was circulated to members present at the meeting.

The report indicated that advantage had been taken of several South West Museum Federation training events including Income Generation and Forward Planning Workshops, which were attended by the Chairman of the museum and Cllr. Vijeh, who, at last year's AGM, became a trustee of the museum. Reference was made to the season having ended well although available SSDC funding continued to be reduced year on year and admissions were slightly down. On the plus side, the number of friends had increased and monies raised from other grant sources, donations and shop sales had shown an increase.

This year the aim was to continue to build on membership and to seek additional ways in which to engage the local community, particularly younger members. As becoming a friend only cost £10 per year it was hoped that existing members would renew their membership and take up the offer of introducing a friend or family member to help raise the museum's profile.

The report also informed members of the museum's planned activities for this season and of the dates for several events that were to be held.

NOTED.

116. Area West Committee – Forward Plan (Agenda item 11)

Reference was made to the agenda report, which informed members of the proposed Area West Committee Forward Plan.

The Area Development Manager (West) informed members that the next report regarding the Highways Maintenance Programme had been included in the forward plan as an item for the agenda for the May 2012 meeting.

The Area Development Manager (West) noted the comments of a member regarding the inclusion of an update on the Stop Line Way on the forward plan.

RESOLVED: that the Area West Committee Forward Plan as attached to the agenda be noted.

(Resolution passed without dissent)

*(Andrew Gillespie, Area Development Manager (West) – 01460 260426)
(andrew.gillespie@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

117. Budget Monitoring Report for the Period Ending 31st December 2011 (Agenda item 12)

The Area Development Manager (West) summarised the agenda report, which updated members on the current financial position of the Area West budgets as at the end of December 2011.

The Committee noted the details contained within the budget monitoring report.

NOTED

*(Catherine Hood, Corporate Accountant – 01935 462157)
(catherine.hood@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

118. Feedback on Planning Applications Referred to the Regulation Committee (Agenda item 13)

There was no feedback to report as there were no planning applications that had been referred recently by the Committee to the Regulation Committee.

NOTED.

*(David Norris, Development Manager – 01935 462382)
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

119. Planning Appeals (Agenda item 14)

The Committee noted the details contained in the agenda report, which informed members of a planning appeal received.

NOTED.

*(David Norris, Development Manager – 01935 462382)
(david.norris@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

120. Date and Venue for Next Meeting (Agenda item 15)

Members noted that the next scheduled meeting of the Committee would be held on Wednesday, 21st March 2012 at the earlier time of 4.00 p.m. at the Shrubbery Hotel, Ilminster. It was noted that the Local Development Framework – Draft Core Strategy would be the only item for discussion on the agenda unless there were any planning applications that needed to be determined in which case they would be considered after the Core Strategy item.

NOTED.

*(Andrew Blackburn, Committee Administrator – 01460 260441)
(andrew.blackburn@southsomerset.gov.uk)*

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Chairman